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Missing Smoke Alarms Contribute to Franklin Multiple-Death Fire

State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan and Franklin Fire Chief Gary B. McCarraher announced the cause of today's early morning fatal fire at 46 E Street in Franklin. Investigators traced the source of the fire to a bench in the basement that held a television set. Further testing will be required to determine the exact nature of the malfunction. The fire took the lives of an older couple and their grown daughter.

Smoke Alarms Are the First Line of Defense

State Fire Marshal Coan said, "A working smoke alarm can double your chance of surviving a fire. It is amazing in this day and age that in fatal fire after fatal fire we still find smoke alarms that don't work or as this case no smoke alarms at all."

Investigators found no evidence of any smoke alarms in the home. According to the Massachusetts Fire Incident Reporting System (MFIRS), 30% of home fire deaths in 2004 occurred where there are no working smoke alarms. In April there were no working smoke alarms in a North Andover fire that claimed the life of an adored schoolteacher.

Chief McCarraher said, "Franklin firefighters faced intense heat and flames as they attempted to effect a rescue of the fire victims. Our hearts are heavy and our thoughts are with the family."

The fire was jointly investigated by the Franklin Fire Department, Franklin Police Department, State Police investigators assigned to the Office of the State Fire Marshal and Norfolk County District Attorney William R. Keating's Office and technical assistance was received from electrical experts.

Coan added, "I want to take this opportunity to ask every citizen of the Commonwealth if you do not have a smoke alarm – get one now. If you have smoke alarms already, test each one of them to make sure they are working. If you cannot remember the last time you changed the batteries, install fresh ones now"

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